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wrong, the necessary consequence of the former. But, having made a promise which we cannot keep without injustice, surely cannot authorize us to commit that injustice by keeping it. The impropriety of making the promise rests on its own ground, and when it is made, we ought rather to consider what is then our proper line of conduct, independently of any regard for a promise merely considered as such. Having made it, we must submit to the shame which is the necessary consequence of a rash or improper action, but which surely cannot be done away by any adherence to what ought never to have been made.

I hope I am not misunderstood. I am far from wishing to encourage a sophistical turn of mind, or to authorize evasive refinements, to the destruction of substantial morality. I have stated my case, and it is on that I rest my arguments. I, therefore, beg leave to solicit from your readers who may differ from me, a statement of their sentiments on the subject.

I am, with every respect, &c.

φιλᾶγας.

Edinburgh.

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

WHEN I took the liberty, some time back, of offering to the public, through the Belfast Magazine, a few remarks on the sectarian spirit of the Bible Societies, I was, I confess, but *partially* informed as to the real character of those establishments. I had even indulged the hope of a union between the Protestants (who are still the only members,) and the Roman Catholics of this country, on fair and comprehensive principles. The project was visionary! By an express provision, the church of England version *only*,

can be circulated by the Society; and though some country members might agree, with your Lambeg correspondent, to admit the Douay also, there is little reason to believe that the parent society would rescind a regulation adopted on its first institution, and adhered to since that period with inflexible rigour. The truth is of the Bible Society, they are a Protestant establishment. Their presidents, vice-presidents, secretaries, all their patrons and subscribers, are Protestants of one denomination or other, all receiving the same book of Scripture, though divided infinitely as to its meaning. Thus the vast multitude of sectaries that meet in the Bible Societies, from the church of England Bishops, down to the Methodist of the *newest light*, do all agree, first, in receiving the Protestant translation, as the book of Scripture; secondly, that the private judgment of each individual is its only interpreter: in both differing from Roman Catholics.

Thus the Bible Societies are completely adapted to every variety of Protestantism, but evidently at variance with Catholic principle.

Such being the facts, the demand of M—— is quite inconsiderate: “why should Catholics require comments to their own Bible, when the Protestants require none to *theirs*?” It is a mere affectation of concession to say, as he does, “were *our* version edited with notes, so I think should *theirs*,” because every Protestant church, if it be consistent, must disavow any privilege of interpreting Scripture; and because no interpretation could be devised, adapted to the countless and varying forms of Protestant belief. For them to add comments would be, not presumptuous, inconsistent, invidious *only*; it would be impossible! With Catholics it is otherwise. They pretend to have, actually, an *authorized*

interpretation, by which they believe the word of God is not mutilated, but rendered intelligible and beneficial. Such being the Catholic doctrine regarding Scripture, it is a perfection in their Bible; that it should have comments, because this fixes the faith of all in that unity which is the soul of Catholicity. If, then, a Society were founded, for disseminating Scriptural knowledge among Catholics, doctrinal comments would, with great propriety and consistency, be added to the text, except the views of the Society were carried to something beyond the professed object.

In a mixed association, therefore, into which Protestant and Catholic Scriptures would be admitted, for their respective populations, the Catholics, I maintain, would not be fairly dealt with, if denied those comments which are to them so useful, and so uninjurious to others. Nay it is absurd, as well as illiberal, to refuse the Catholic his comments, *which he wishes to have*, BECAUSE the Protestant *prefers*, on principle, to have *his* Bible without comment!! The *direct contrary* should be the inference. The same liberality that dictates that no commentary should be imposed on Protestants, should concede to the Catholic that authorised interpretation, from which to deviate were to depart from his religion.

Indeed, those who would allow Catholics the Douay version, only on the terms of their suppressing the Catholic commentary, fail. I think, in bringing forward any *liberal reasoning* whatever, to their aid.

Would these advocates of free examination take exceptions against the Catholic comments, lest the elucidations they afforded in defence of that faith might seduce the Protestant reader? A writer, in the Magazine for January, does not appre-

hend the Douay Bible would be much sought for by Protestants, and the circumstance of Catholic notes being added, would certainly be no additional inducement to the Protestant purchaser. Persons of that community have, in general, but little temptation to look into Catholic books.

The other arguments against the admission of notes for the Catholics, are all Anti-Catholic, and of course illiberal. No Catholic can subscribe to the invective declamation of your Lambeg correspondent; and I am astonished he could join to professions of toleration and good will, a formal impeachment of the vital principle of Catholicism. I believe this gentleman to be as liberal and as tolerant as he professes himself to be; but, if his signature were less known than it is, one would be tempted to put a very unfavourable construction on his declared wish of "*complete emancipation to his Roman Catholic brethren.*" One would be reminded of those "*REAL FRIENDS,*"* who, in the extensiveness of their good-will towards the Catholic body, would couple their *liberation from church authority*, or, as they term it, "*religious emancipation,*" with their civil and political enfranchisement. That is, they would sever the essential connection between clergy and people, and would *then* tolerate Catholics in their religion, when they had renounced its essential principles!

* I allude not here to the *Methodist incendiary*, the writer of the letters lately republished from the Patriot. *Here* there could be no comparison, but in *comparison of contrast*. I allude to those *kind and gentle "friends,"* who now and then, in the newspapers, profess a mighty solicitude for the independence of Roman Catholics, and their emancipation from clerical tyranny.

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I do not suspect M—— of such insidiousness. *Him* I believe not only sincere, but ardent and zealous in the cause of toleration. And therefore it is, I would detach him from the advocacy of an institution, that does not, as I can find, merit the confidence of conscientious Catholics, nor, as I suspect, ever will show any disposition to meet them in a spirit of conciliation. They are not only a "Protestant," they are an *Anti-Catholic* establishment; because, though they *did* concede to Catholics their own translation, (a thing, I admit, of minor importance,) they would give them *even this* on Anti-Catholic principles; that is, not only without notes, but to the *exclusion of Church authority*. This is their spirit, and even their language: and the Catholic, who, in deference to this reigning idea, yielded up his comments to leave judgment free, would lend his influence towards the propagation of the great Protestant principle among the illiterate of his communion. *This* might be dangerous. Though I find that Catholics look upon the plain sense of Scripture, even in any translation, to be favourable to their doctrines; though I have not heard of any proselytes to the religion of Protestants from the reading of their version, still the acquiescence of respectable Catholics in this rejection of authority, *might* prove dangerous to the faith of the simple.

Having trespassed so far on your space, without, however, exhausting the subject, I shall not trouble you long with a contest about anonymous signatures, or any discussion as to how far I may be entitled to the name I have assumed. *Let my arguments be examined.* Yet I shall not resign my title of *Free-thinker*, because there are some inquiries in which I believe I have ar-

rived at safe conclusions; or because there are *some subjects* which, *I have found*, are not open for inquiry;* some points, in fine, as to which I am no longer a seeker. Above all, I shall not surrender the title, because I claim to the conscientious and cherished opinions of others, the same indulgence I ask for my own.

....."*Scimus, et hanc veniam, Petimusque damusque vicissim.*"

I am, &c.
A REAL FREETHINKER.

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

AS it may prove too arduous a task "to remove the jail and court-house from Carrickfergus to Belfast," as has been seriously proposed, it would neither be impossible nor impracticable for the inhabitants of Belfast to build a decent court house for themselves: and if unsuccessful in removing the assize-courts, the same building would serve for another purpose, not less necessary, and perhaps more useful to them, namely, a manor court-house and marshalsea.

The present wretched accommodation for debtors is well known; it is also in every one's recollection, how the manor court has been dragged from place to place, ever since the old market house was converted into a provost prison; and it is not a little surprizing, that no public notice has ever been taken of so flagrant an inconvenience. If the emoluments of that house are not sufficient

* From the strange irritability of some people, one would suppose the subject of Bible Societies to be "holy ground;" and that any discussion as to the immaculate character of a *Bible Society*, would be equally profane, as to call in question the authority of the *Bible itself*!